



the **TREE LINE**

the official monthly
publication of the

BONSAI SOCIETY of PORTLAND

Upcoming Events

February
2023

Monthly Meetings:

February 19 9am-1pm Mentorship 101, Basics Class

February 28 6-9pm BSOP Monthly meeting, Bill Valavanis: presentation on Japanese maple bonsai, and a forest creation

March 19 9am-1pm Mentorship 101, Basics Class

March 28 6-9pm BSOP Monthly meeting, Repotting workshop

April 16 9am-1pm Mentorship 101, Basics Class

April 25 6-9pm BSOP Monthly meeting, Dan Robinson, presentation on carving

Greetings BSOP,

I hope everyone enjoyed learning from Daisaku Nomoto last month. He is one of the top artists in Japan and we were lucky to have him.

I'm looking forward to hosting Bill Valavanis this month for a program on Japanese maple bonsai and a forest creation demonstration. Bill has been growing maples for over 40 years and has one of the best deciduous collections in the country. He started the US National Bonsai Exhibition and is coming from Rochester New York.

Cheers, *Andrew Robson* BSOP President



MENTORSHIP 101

First of all, a big thank you to all the people who made this class happen. There were six mentors to share their knowledge with the students: Roger Case, Keith Wingfield, Lee Cheatle, Brandon Myren, Brandon McMullin and myself. We have three substitute mentors, Ron Cas-cisa, Shelli Svoboda and Henry Milczuk waiting in the wings.

It takes a lot of hands to get this thing up and running and I didn't have to bribe anyone. Roger was cutting fir branches to go with the pipe cleaners for teaching structural wiring and then hauling the juniper whips to the class. He found a nursery with just the right trees for two of our classes and he is boarding all the trees we gather. Lee was making calls to all his friends of which he has many and Keith connected with a nursery friend to donate the pines we will be using in the February class. Brandon Myren was raging through the Hillsboro area, but pickings there are kinda thin. Brandon McMullin is attempting to keep us focused on the prize, taking attendance and is our connection to the Board.

So many members have jumped in to get the classes started and to make sure they will be around in the future. David Mesa is so good at the tech stuff and creating the Sign Up Genius registry. Steve Wilcox contributed so much with the organizing and good advice. He will be joining the mentors in March. Patrice Morrow kept us informed with membership information and messaging. John Eads volunteered to be our go between when dealing with the nurseries and Robert Wofford has offered to grow some elms for our class in 2025. I think Barry Baer-tlein may have something growing in his garden for us too.

And the class! There were 28 people in the room, 18 students, 4 from the waiting list and 1 drop-in. We were able to move one of the wait-listers into a permanent student position and one served as a substitute. As always, we invite BSOP members to sign up on the waiting list in the Sign Up Genius that is posted on the club website or just drop in. For those who join the waiting list, you will receive the student packets and the opportunity to be seated in the class should an absence occur.

For January's class we played with running juniper whips, cleaned them up, put on some structural wiring and bent them into a cascade style or semi cascade. They were feminine and graceful and definitely something I would like in my collection. It is possible we will bring the junipers back in April or May to pot them. I think the students were happy with what they accomplished. By the end of the four hours, we all had made new friends and were enjoying being together.

In February, the pine is the thing. We will be learning about single flush vs multi flush, short needle vs long needle and development vs refinement. A lot of information. There will be cleaning, removing flaws, wiring and styling work on a Mugo pine. Mugo might be my favorite pine. It is pest and drought resistant as well as vigorous and adaptable. They respond well to all the pain we might inflict on them. Perfect for beginners and experts alike.

Come join us on February 19th in the Oregon Grape Room from 9:00 to 1:00. We look forward to seeing you there.

The M101 TEAM

Roger Case, Steve Wilcox, Keith Wingfield, Lee Cheatle, Brandon Myren, Brandon McMullin, David Mesa, Joanne Raiton (joanneraiton@msn.com)

BSOP February Monthly Meeting Headliner

Bill Valavanis has been practicing bonsai for around 60 years. Recently inducted into the National Bonsai Hall of Fame, Bill is the third to receive this honor, following John Naka and Yuji Yoshimura.

The National Bonsai Hall of Fame has been established to identify and honor individuals who have achieved excellence in the art of bonsai and who have contributed to the advancement of bonsai in the United States. The National Bonsai & Penjing Museum created this award to recognize those who have dedicated their lives to bonsai in the United States and to fostering a greater appreciation for American bonsai.

Here is a photograph of Bill at the Hall of Fame ceremony at the time of his induction and he is shown with the newest donation at the time, a Dwarf Scots Pine that was completely container grown by Bill for over 45 years at the induction. Bill is an exemplary bonsai artist, educator and scholar. With over 60 trips to Japan to highlight bonsai in the famous gardens and exhibitions his blog is a phenomenal resource for all of us.

Let's give him a huge BSOP welcome when he joins us at our February 28th club meeting where he will be giving us a presentation on Japanese Maples. Mark your calendars now - it is a meeting you won't want to miss.



Repotting Season

We are fast approaching one of the most critical tasks we perform with our bonsai - REPOTTING if you haven't started yet! It is a foundational aspect of the art and one we need to master in order to be successful in our bonsai practice.

The Bonsai Society of Portland's webpage <https://www.portlandbonsai.org/> has a great deal of information to help you be successful in your bonsai journey and I can't encourage you enough to take advantage of all it has to offer especially in the Instruction Tab. At this time of year it would be worth reviewing Scott Elser's articles in this section. Two that are time appropriate and highly recommended are his **Bonsai Soil Mixes & Compositions** and **Step By Step Repotting**.

Just as every great painting needs to be displayed in the right frame - every bonsai needs to be shown in the right pot. The aesthetics of the ceramic must harmonize and support the bonsai planted in it. There is a good beginning article from Bonsai Empire on the subject that will help you begin to think through your pot choices .

Finally have you already ordered and received all the supplies you'll need in the to repot and get done? If not you better hurry up or you will run out of time and be scrambling like mad. Pots and supplies are available by members who vend at all of our club meetings and I hope you use them. This is a great resource that many clubs don't enjoy. We are fortunate to have them so take advantage of the great material and convenience that their service offers each of us.

Jeffrey Robson

BSOP LIBRARY MAKES A GOOD THING BETTER

With the year-end inventory complete, we have posted an updated listing of BSOP library books on the Members Only section of the club website. The 377 books can be searched by Category, Title and Author. A search by Category is a good first-pass option that identifies several different topics, such as Conifers, Deciduous, Penjing, etc. You can even use the website to reserve a book for check-out at the next meeting. Just click on Reserve a Book.

And a huge THANK YOU to Ron and Becky Yasenachak for their donation of two magnificent photograph books from Taiwan. One appears to be primarily of ficus exhibited in 2002 (no English but impressive photos). The other is for the 2004 Suiseki Exhibition (some English). If you want to know what all the fuss is about a "bunch of rocks", check out the divine photographs of this 2004 Suiseki Exhibition book. These came in after the inventory, so if you'd like to reserve one, refer to BSOP1888, 2003 Taiwanese Exhibit, or to BSOP1887, Selection of 2004 BCI Suiseki Exhibition.

Pacific Bonsai Museum

The greenest moss you've ever seen; February is moss month in the Pacific NW.

As you know, the Pacific NW region happens to be a great moss-growing location, particularly in February, when, after all of our winter rain, moss reaches its green peak!

We love the lift the bright green brings, plus of course all the benefits a nicely mossed-up bonsai container conveys to the tree roots below

Our moss is positively electric in February and worth a visit on its own.

Plan Your Visit: <https://pacificbonsaimuseum.org/visit/planyourvisit/>

Special shout out to moss expert Zack Stanley-- a former Pacific Bonsai Museum employee, currently a Horticulturist and Penjing Specialist at Portland's Lan Su Chinese Garden. Thanks for fostering a true love of moss in us all.



Moss detail

Hinoki Cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*); Original Artist: Hal Mahoney; A bonsai since 1983



Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*), in training since 1956; Original artist: Kai Kawahara.

The following article was originally printed in March of 2020. Please keep an eye on the weather forecast before committing to repotting this spring. And take advantage of Scott's great series that is archived on the BSOP website. In other posts, Scott gives further important details. They are full of valuable hints and insights, including entries containing more detailed repotting techniques!

Scott's BRANCH TIPS

BONSAI TECHNIQUE & PHILOSOPHY

Repotting Update, March 13, 2020

It seems that each year since I started this column, over six years ago, I have written about repotting in the Spring. Since repotting is such an essential part of our bonsai regimen, I thought that I would recap a few things and maybe pass on a few new tips. I just finished teaching several workshops specifically on repotting, with one more to go. Seeing a few common misconceptions, and some really good practices brought a few things to the forefront of my mind. I am sure that you are well into your repotting season by the time you read this. I started just last week – about March 1 on my trees.

The first point to consider is that this is the only time that you get to work on the roots for at least two years. That is for deciduous. For conifers it might be 5 years. The work that you do now has to last the tree for that period of time. We have several times to correct branch structure by pruning, wiring, etc... during any one season. However, this is the only opportunity that we have to work on the roots, correcting flaws, changing the soil or container and setting up the health and growth of the tree for the next several years. It's worth getting it right, to the best of our ability and knowledge.

First and foremost is the aftercare, so I am starting at the end, rather than the beginning. Make sure that you can keep any tree that was repotted this season from freezing, or at least the root portions. It's also best to be able to keep them out of the rain for several weeks until you see the tree starting to use up the moisture in the container. That means that it has recovered and is ready for the transition to our great Pacific Northwest spring weather. Rain.

For the first time in 30 years of bonsai, I built a heat bed to facilitate the recovery of plants after repotting. I mention the 30 years, because it is not in any way essential – I have made it fine this far. However, I can tackle the aging and declining root balls of some very old, collected trees with confidence. I started that process last year with great success and am now moving on to harder specimens That may be the subject of a future article. What makes my heat bed a little different is the fact that it is not in a greenhouse, but just out in the open on my patio. I love it already after just one week.

Next up is, have a plan. Do you have all of your soil components sifted and/or mixed and ready to go. Do you have the pots? More importantly, do you have the time? I am finding that just taking a pine from a six-inch pot up to an eight inch, with pruning, etc... is taking me about half an hour at cruising speed. I can't seem to do a medium size tree in less than two hours. And since most of my trees are larger, you can do the math.

If you run short on time, wrap the root ball in a wet towel and finish it later – within a day. Or you can heal it into a mound of something you might have, like old soil, bark dust, etc... Just make sure that it's moist. Once you have the tree popped out of the old container, work on the new one before you start on the root ball. The less time your tree is out in the air, the better

If it is going back into the same container, take time now to rinse it out and let it drain and dry. If you know what pot you are going to use, put the drain screen in. The point really is to be looking ahead at what you are going to need to do to finish the repotting. Do you need to sift more top dressing? Do I need chopsticks of a different size? You get the idea.

My next point is to be gentle. Use a root hook only when necessary and with great care. Slow going with chopsticks or angled tweezers is much easier on the tree. The soil should be moist but not wet. Handle roots with care. You can decide later what to cut off, but if you mangle them, the choice is made for you. And remember that we don't want to bare root a conifer. It's chances of surviving, let alone thriving, go down really fast. Also remember that you don't necessarily have to cut roots to fit them into the pot. If you feel that you need to keep more roots for the health and vigor of a tree, you can simply fold them gently into the pot and address them in another few years when you have more root mass to utilize.

What soil you use is quite the conundrum and I am always seeking to improve what I have for each tree. There is no doubt of the effectiveness of Boon mix for bonsai, a 1:1:1 mix of Lava, Pumice, and Akadama screened to between 1/16 and 1/4 inch particle size. But it can be tweaked. And a lot. Take out the 1/8-1/4 for shohin, or the 1/16-1/8 for trees that like it a little drier, like mountain pines. But there's more. I have mentioned in the past that we can use up to 100% Akadama on deciduous trees. I am getting mostly favorable results with that – better than the standard mix.

But then there is Michael Hagedorn who favors just Pumice and Akadama, and our own Dennis Vojtilla that uses Lava and Akadama. They are leaving one component out and you can hardly argue their practice, looking at their trees. So, experiment on what works for you. I just had a workshop with the Eugene club, and their president, Tom Fincel (An outstanding bonsai artist and even better person to get to know) had a large container each of sifted Pumice and Akadama (A student of Michael's) with which he could easily mix up whatever proportions he likes for any particular tree and I really feel myself gravitating to that approach.

The last thought that I leave you with is what was hammered into me (albeit it gently) by Boon. Neatness counts. It carries through the whole process. It starts with the preparation of the pot. Make sure the screens are fastened neatly into a clean pot. My screen clips are always oriented perpendicular to the front of the pot to offer the lowest profile, so no one sees them hanging down in a show. The tie down wires likewise, running front to back instead of side to side, which uses less wire and is usually hidden by the pot's feet. I have to do all of this anyway, so it really is not any more time to make it tidy. Why would you tie a crooked tie, or leave your shoes half tied?

On a finishing note, make sure that you do not mound the soil too much. This is a consistent trait with beginners. Level off the soil where the roots start and taper it down to where you have a good 1/4 inch lip around the edge of the pot. This not only looks good, but makes it so that the water stays in the pot when you water.

Happy repotting. *Scott Elser*

Buds are beginning to swell for this
Prunus incisa 'Kojo no mai'



Final Haikus

First is for my wife
Second, for my bonsai friends
Last is for my life.

He said he loved her
No matter what next year
brings
Always kept her near

Fond farewell my friends
I hope you liked my musings
Now my Haiku ends

Life is like a test
You may not know the answer
Always try your best

Ron Yasenchak

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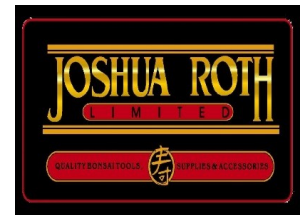
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The Bonsai Society of Portland meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

The Milwaukie Center

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Enter parking lot from Rusk Road

Visitors are always welcome!

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